

## Compte rendu

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### Ouvrage recensé :

*Cultures and Ecologies: A Native Fishing Conflict on the Saugeen-Bruce Peninsula*. By Edwin C. Koenig. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. Pp 240, ISBN 0-8020-8847-3)

par Stephen George

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***Cultures and Ecologies: A Native Fishing Conflict on the Saugeen-Bruce Peninsula.*** By Edwin C. Koenig. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. Pp 240, ISBN 0-8020-8847-3)

Edwin C. Koenig's *Cultures and Ecologies*, is an oral ethnohistory of the fisheries on the Saugeen-Bruce Peninsula in Lake Huron, Ontario. Koenig explores historical and recent fisheries activity in the region as he highlights the contentious issues between Native and non-Native fishermen. There are sound ethnographic observations and techniques used in this work. Koenig provides insights into how the conflict is as much a result of competing cultural perspectives as it is a competition over scarce and coveted resources. The work discusses the way "conservation" has been conceived of in traditional Native culture and how, over time and through changing cultural spaces, the traditional knowledge of Ojibway has sustained the indigenous people of the peninsula.

The book is not a polemic, however, as the people Koenig interviewed voice sometimes contradictory accounts of what conservation means today and what it meant to their ancestors in the past. There is a nice blend and even flow in this ethnography between the interviews with First Nations members, whose views and knowledge of fishing go from an ancient understanding to modern day fishery resource management practices that mirror traditional knowledge and practices. The book is filled with wide ranging discussions on contemporary fisheries including ongoing local community revitalization efforts to sustain fish stocks and efforts to maintain a diminishing fisheries culture.

Koenig spends a chapter debating the meaning and intent of historical writing and hones in on what this has meant to descriptions Native people have had foisted on them generally. Native people too often appear in books, movies and "historical" accounts not as agents of their reality but as victims of it. Koenig quite rightly disavows the passive Native concept for that of the active hunter and fisher who used the land and waterways for sustenance, trade and in the twentieth century, commercially. The Great Lakes commercial fisheries of the 1800s tended to favour the settler culture's interests over those of the Ojibway. However, Natives maintained a continued use of the resource well into the twentieth century. In 1993 the provincial court in Ontario rendered

the “Fairgrieve decision” which recognized Native fishing rights. Fairgrieve emboldened Native fishers and community members generally, but also brought conflict with non-Native sport and commercial fishers.

How Native rights will be balanced into equitable resource access for all continues to exacerbate Native fisheries disputes on Lake Huron, as well as on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Canada. Koenig’s work is comparable to Ken Coates’ *The Marshall Decision and Native Rights* (2000) concerning the ongoing Mi’kmaq fisheries in several ways. The watershed decisions of Marshall and Fairgrieve were initially thought to be a boon for Native fishers. In the end, however, these legal decisions were mixed blessings as they tended to create unattainable expectations in the minds of community members, who wished to make livelihoods from an ever decreasing fish population. Complex layers of bureaucracy and years of wrangling between all levels of government and the communities involved made it difficult to devise a fisheries management plan that would be acceptable to all parties. Furthermore, non-Native commercial and sport fishermen reacted violently to what they saw as “special rights” given to Natives, leading to confrontations on the water and in the towns and villages where both groups lived and interacted socially.

Koenig’s title, *Cultures and Ecologies: A Native Fishing Conflict on the Saugeen-Bruce Peninsula*, is an ironic one, as the conflict is not exclusively a Native one but one that exists in cross-cultural and cross-generational contexts. Native fisheries are thought of as being conflict-ridden and are often hyped by media as being so intrinsically. In point of fact, Native fisheries preceded European contact by millennia. Indigenous fisheries continued throughout the period of European settlement and led to interaction, trade, and commercial enterprise between Natives and non-Natives. The transactions between these groups ranged from the exploitative to the mutually beneficial to the downright hegemonic depending on the era and circumstances. Conflict is a very contentious word in this case as there are many smaller histories which predate the writing of “official histories.” Perhaps this is exactly the author’s point in choosing the title that he has, to draw attention to an expectation

many of us have on Native fisheries, only to spend a few hundred plus pages countering that notion altogether. If this was the author's intention, then he has succeeded.

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**Reference**

Coates, Ken. 2000. *The Marshall Decision and Native Rights*. Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press.

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***The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s.***

By Liz Conor. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004. Pp. xx+334, ISBN 0-253-21670-2)

This book is a study of women and their interaction with popular culture in 1920s Australia. The book focuses on the woman as a spectacle (hence *The Spectacular Modern Woman*), especially in postwar industrialisation with readily available magazines and newspapers and the increased disposable income for working women that enabled them to buy advertised products. About these images of women, Conor states:

Visual representations of women may construct a range of meanings, imaging them as anything from willing victims of male violence to assertive feminist heroines. However, across this spectrum of meanings there remains one constant: images of women are always producing meanings of women's visibility. Consequently, feminine subjectivity has come to be increasingly performed within the visual register (xv)

Following an introduction and a chapter entitled "The Status of the Woman-Object," Conor arranges the book in two parts: "The Modern Scene" and "Modern Appearing Women," each consisting of three chapters. The former discusses "The City Girl," "The Screen-Struck Girl," and "The Mannequin", while the latter deals with "The Beauty Contestant," "The Primitive Woman," and "The Flapper." This is followed by her conclusion, "Feminine Identity and Visual Culture."

One drawback of the book is that it focuses solely on Australian culture, which is not immediately made clear. At some points this research is backed by sources from elsewhere, and similar findings from